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TAGS: [PREL](#) [PGOV](#) [PINS](#) [IR](#) [IZ](#)
SUBJECT: ABDEL MEHDI DISCUSSES STRATEGIC DIALOGUE,
POTENTIAL TRIP TO IRAN

REF: A. EMBASSY BAGHDAD CLASS 0/I 26APR07

[1](#)B. 2006 BAGHDAD 4172

Classified By: Ambassador Ryan C. Crocker for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d).

Advancing the Strategic Dialogue

[1](#)1. (S) Vice President Adel Abdel Mehdi discussed the course of the U.S.-SCIRI strategic dialogue further with the Ambassador in an April 27 meeting. Abdel Mehdi said that, upon reading the papers provided by the U.S. side for the security, economic, and political committees (ref A), he was concerned that the papers seemed to "have requests for SCIRI" rather than stand as the basis for a bilateral dialogue. The Ambassador assured Abdel Mehdi that the papers were merely illustrative, giving examples of the sort of issues the U.S. side would want to discuss, in the same way that SCIRI's papers gave examples of issues SCIRI wanted to discuss (ref B). The Ambassador and Abdel Mehdi agreed that the committees' work would provide an opportunity for both sides to discuss a range of specific, short term issues as well as a broader set of more strategic issues including the long-term U.S.-Iraq relationship.

[1](#)2. (S) The Ambassador gave the example of Basrah as a critical issue where government institutions, saddled perhaps by a lack of capacity, were having difficulty maintaining order in the face of intense political and economic competition. The Ambassador also suggested a discussion in the political committee of how each side envisioned advancing national unity in Iraq. Abdel Mehdi agreed, saying that SCIRI had been thinking hard about this same issue and showing the Ambassador a triangle with the Sunni, Shi'a, and Kurdish communities at the points of the triangle and various issues of overlap or disagreement written around the edges. Abdel Mehdi speculated that the Iraqi army could play a unifying role, but the Ambassador cautioned that the political framework would have to be right for the army to be successful in doing so. Abdel Mehdi said that he would permanently chair the political committee and would chair the security and economic committees when he is available; otherwise, those committees would be chaired by Badr CoR member Hadi al-Amri and Finance Minister Bayan Jabr respectively, with the Mayor of Baghdad also participating in the economic committee.

Potential Trip to Tehran

[1](#)3. (S) Abdel Mehdi told the Ambassador that the Iranians were asking either him or Prime Minister Maliki to visit Tehran "to explain the Sharm conference and discuss other issues." Abdel Mehdi said he did not think the Prime Minister would go, but that he (Abdel Mehdi) might make an

unofficial visit to Tehran in the coming week. The Ambassador told Abdel Mehdi that the U.S. hoped the Iranian Foreign Minister would attend the Sharm conference, as it was in Iraq's interests as well as Iran's. He expressed concern, however, at the succession of senior GOI officials going to Tehran, including an upcoming trip by Deputy Prime Minister Barham Salih. The Ambassador suggested that these visits might give the Iranians the wrong impression that Iraqi leaders were at their beck and call. Abdel Mehdi assured the Ambassador that, to the contrary, "We will put pressure on them." He and Salih, he continued, "will tell them that their behavior in Iraq is negative, in neither country's interest." Abdel Mehdi argued that Iraqi leaders' visits to Tehran achieved positive results, pointing to a visit during which he convinced the Iranians to support the TAL. The Ambassador said that it was important to point out the implications of the Iranians' actions: for example, in the south, Iran appeared not to be supporting the process of extending the Iraqi government's control.

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